

Upper Valley

Executive Summary

Intent: The Upper Valley reach extends from Friars Road Bridge to the west boundary of Mission Trails Regional Park. It is a reach comprised of complex physiographic and surface conditions, with a diversity of experiences from the enclosure of steep valley walls in the east to broad and open near Admiral Baker Golf Course. Heavily impacted by human activity, conditions in this reach range from the severe character of a surface mine to the exotic landscape of a golf course, bracketed alternately with dense development and sage scrub habitat. This reach is particularly significant for habitat, offering the potential to extend the diverse habitats of Mission Trails Regional Park further into the valley. This reach also offers tremendous potential to transform the landscape dramatically and improve the health of riparian and terrestrial ecosystems.

Introduction

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Condition: The Upper Valley is characterized by three hydrologic conditions that are deleterious to the health of the river system. First, the gravel extraction mine bordering Mission Trails Regional Park has channelized the river and disrupted habitat continuity through and across the mine site. The river is similarly channelized further downstream through the federally owned and maintained Admiral Baker Golf Course. This element poses additional risk of surface runoff-carrying pesticides, fertilizers and other pollutants-because of the lack of a buffer between the golf course and the river.

Secondly, the river corridor through the mine site is infested with exotic plant species, particularly Giant Reed (*Arundo donax*). These exotics displace native riparian vegetation, causing the concomitant loss of the animal species that would typically inhabit this vegetation. Finally, the river channel is interrupted by a series of ponds that obstruct the natural sediment transport processes of the stream. A problem shared by other ponds in the system, the unnatural stream flow invites further infestation by non-native plant species; in still water conditions the encroaching species is typically the surface plant Water Primrose (*Ludwigia spp.*).

Recommendations:

- Establish a continuous open space and viable habitat corridor in the Upper Valley that achieves wildlife movement and habitat objectives. The appropriate design and layout of the corridor should be determined during site specific planning processes that consider habitat, water quality, hydraulic, recreation, and access and development opportunities
- Identify land appropriate for an open space amenity that is accessible and usable by the public.
- Improve interface between Admiral Baker Golf Course and the river.
- Explore opportunities to improve water quality and river pattern.
- Create sites at waystations to interpret the history of the valley settlement and the Old Mission Dam flume.

- Balance the improvement of water quality, the movement of wildlife, the movement of people with high quality development within the Upper Valley.

The San Diego River Park passes through the Grantville Redevelopment Study area. Collaboration between the River Park planning effort and the Grantville study should continue to find opportunities for shared benefits and to ensure compatibility between the two efforts. The redevelopment study presents an important means of implementing the Park through the Upper Valley.

As redevelopment occurs, consideration should be given to separating the river from ponds throughout the Upper Valley, as this action will likely improve flow velocities and reestablish some degree of sediment transport. Hydraulic and hydrologic studies should be conducted in conjunction with redevelopment planning to determine the physical and hydrologic characteristics and ecologic condition of each specific pond, and provide recommendations as to the feasibility, ecological value and open space benefit of separating stream flow from the pond in each location.

Key Sites:

Admiral Baker Golf Course

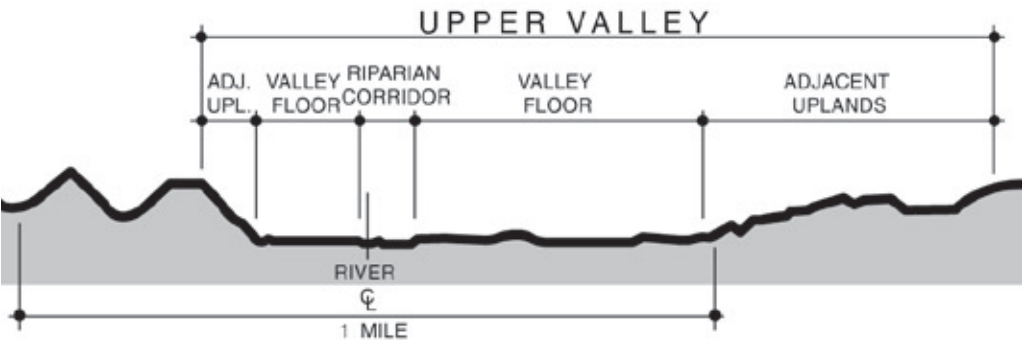
There are no plans to close or redevelop the course, but there are opportunities to integrate the course in the river corridor. Methods of meshing the two landscapes might include pedestrian trail connections across the course or the redevelopment of the golf course as a “links” or target course with native landscaping between tee and green. The incorporation of native plant species, creating a visual link and habitat corridor from the river corridor to the canyon north of the golf course, would be another strong step toward integrating the river and recreational environments.

Key Points

- Continuing ongoing discussions with Navy Planners is essential to finding an appropriate level and means of integrating the golf course with the San Diego River Park.
- This is a critical location for expanding habitat area and connections to the upper canyon north of the golf course.
- The potential exists to create trail connections around or possibly through the golf course.
- Establish an open space habitat, and path corridors that achieve wildlife movement and habitat objectives.
- Create a trail connection from the Tierrasanta Community to the San Diego River Park Trail with an overlook at the upper elevation and a waystation at its intersection.



Upper Valley looking east over Admiral Baker Golf Course



Upper Valley Section

Superior Mine Redevelopment

Evolution of the landscape within the Upper Valley hinges upon successfully engaging the land owners, developers and planners of Superior Mine and adjacent lands with the River Park planning process. As these lands move toward reclamation and redevelopment, collaboration between both planning efforts can bring about benefits to all parties. Creating adequate corridor width for habitat and trail is a minimum requirement. A broad natural corridor through the mine site could serve as a strong organizing feature of the development. This corridor might include trail, native riparian habitat, an infiltration zone for ground water recharge, and/or an improved river channel with introduced meanders. The potential to acquire portions of the site to create open space and recreation land should also be explored. Incorporating elements of the San Diego River Park into the redevelopment of the mine creates the potential of increasing property values and incentive for cooperative planning. The site's close proximity to Mission Trails Regional Park also creates an excellent opportunity to

use the river and its landscape as a unique, and identifying character of the site. Cooperative planning, and river-sensitive design would benefit end-users by providing a visual and recreational amenity, as well as commuter bicycle connection to adjacent communities and trolley service.

In the San Diego River Park Illustrative Concept sketch below, an approach is suggested that expands both native riparian and upland vegetation communities. In this concept the ponds are separated from the river. This concept illustrates only one approach and is not intended to propose a specific design for the site. The best solution can only be determined by studying the specific conditions of the pond and the river in conjunction with the site specific planning effort of the adjacent properties.

Key Points

- Ongoing discussions with Superior Mine land owners and developers is essential to finding an appropriate balance between development and open space.
- Potential for the site to redevelop for more intensive use makes time critical to taking action at the planning level. While mining operations are scheduled to continue for another 20 years, potential redevelopment value may reduce this time frame.
- Create an open space amenity that is accessible and usable by the public that provides access to the river as well as value to the development project. The location, size and use of this amenity should be studied as part of the specific land planning studies for the River Park and the development.
- The 100 foot buffer indicated in the Land Development Code - Biological Guidelines should be of such variable width as to protect the habitat and provide adequate areas for redevelopment.



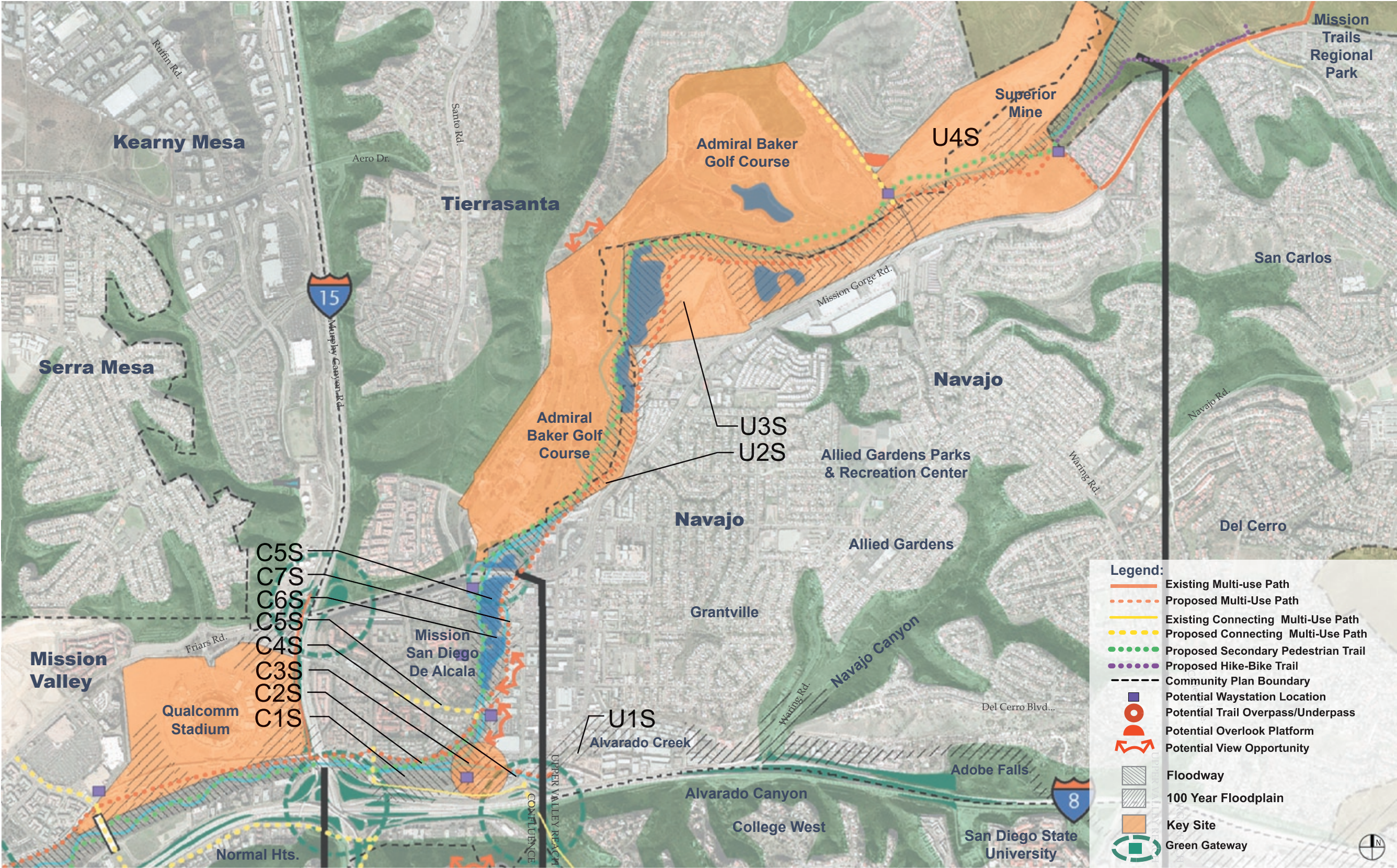
San Diego River Park Illustrative Concept



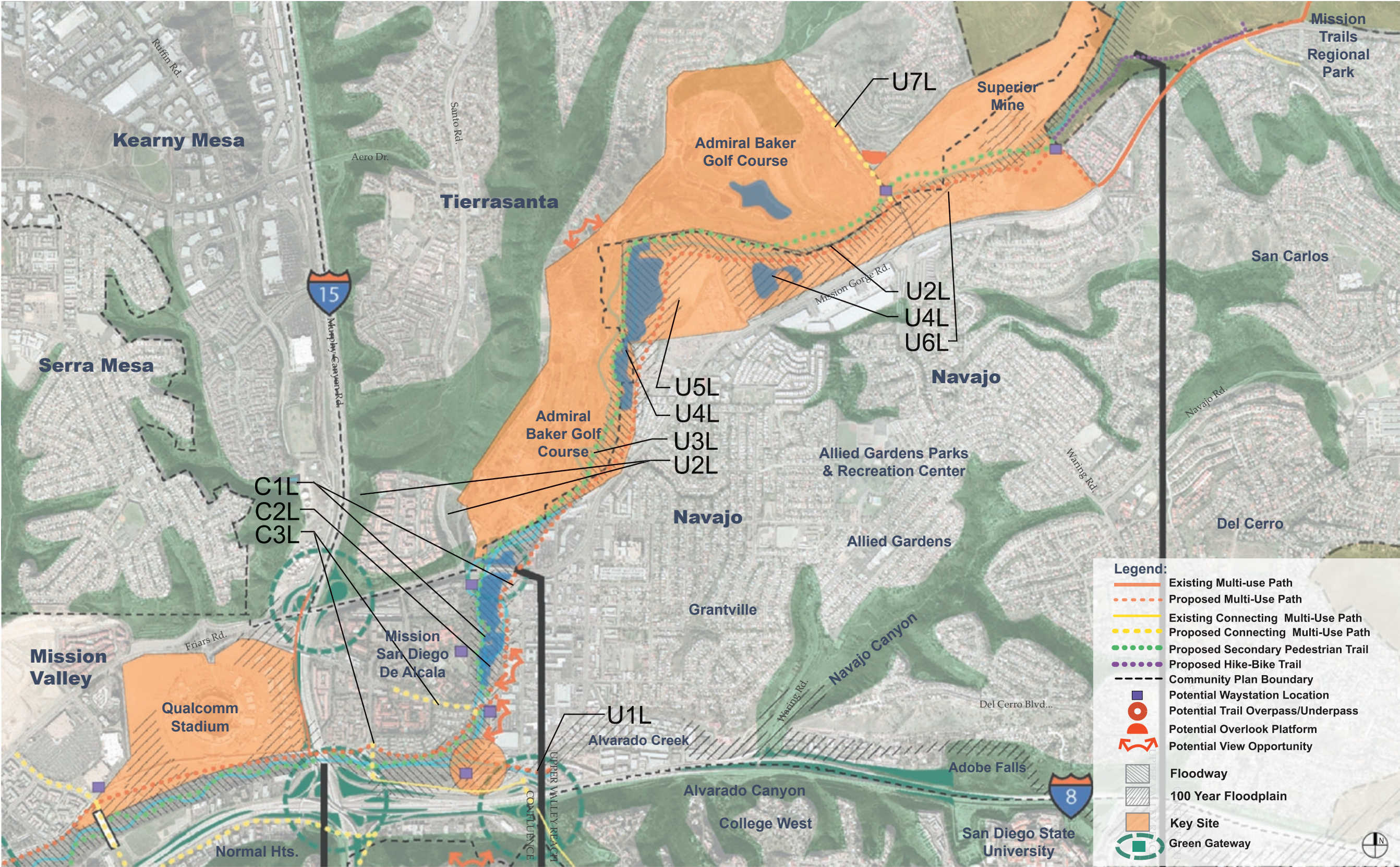
Admiral Baker Golf Course



Superior Mine



KEYNOTE	RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION	BENEFITS				
Short Term - Confluence			HYDROLOGY	ECOLOGY	RECREATION	EDUCATION	
C1S	Develop city owned property as wetland habitat preserve and coordinate with potential water reclamation plant. Potential for Caltrans property to be developed for habitat and areas for the San Diego River Park Trail.	Integrate Caltrans property as part of riparian open space and pursue dedication of new river open space preserve.	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	Executive Summary
C2S	Create San Diego River Park Trail along north edge of river.	Coordinate with the appropriate agencies, community groups and the Grantville Redevelopment Study to identify specific route alignment of potential multi-use trail on north side of the river.			<div></div>		
C3S	Coordinate with proposed Grantville redevelopment to create improved open space at the bend in the river.	Coordinate with Grantville Redevelopment Study to identify potential land for park or open space through acquisition or open space easements.	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	Introduction
C4S	Improve open space and trail connection with Alvarado Canyon and Navajo Canyon.	Coordinate with appropriate agencies and community/special interest groups to study potential and to identify specific route alignment of potential multi-use trail on south side of Alvarado Creek. Coordinate with public agencies to explore potential to aggregate public lands under a single management.	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>		
C5S	Create connection between San Diego River Park Trail and Mission San Diego De Alcala.	Coordinate with appropriate agencies to improve on-street bike lane and provide signage.			<div></div>		Principles
C6S	Augment ponds by removing barriers between sections. A larger deep water body is better than a number of smaller, divided segments. If possible, divert low flow of river around the ponds.	Coordinate with Grantville Redevelopment Study and appropriate agencies and community groups to identify potential for open space easements or land acquisition to increase open space on east edge of ponds.	<div></div>		<div></div>		
C7S	Create San Diego River Park Trail along east edge of river.	Coordinate with appropriate agencies, community groups and the Grantville Redevelopment Study to study potential and to identify specific route alignment of potential multi-use trail on east side of the river if land can be acquired. Identify location for pedestrian bridges crossing the river and creating connection to Mission San Diego de Alacala. If land cannot be acquired study alternative alignment on west side of river.			<div></div>		Recommendations
Short Term - Upper Valley							
U1S	Coordinate with proposed Grantville redevelopment to preserve additional open space along Alvarado Creek Corridor at the confluence with the San Diego River.	Coordinate with appropriate agencies, community groups and the Grantville Redevelopment Study to identify potential land for habitat, trail and recreation through acquisition or open space easements. Coordinate with Navajo Community Plan. Refer to Alvarado Confluence Enhancement on preceding pages.	<div></div>	<div></div>			Design Guidelines
U2S	Create habitat and continuous multi-use trail near river adjacent to Admiral baker Golf Course.	Continue dialogue with Navy planners to explore opportunities to modify golf course to create space for trail corridor and to improve relationship of golf course with the river. Coordinate with Navajo Community Plan.	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	
U3S	Engage land owner and ongoing planning effort to explore potential to acquire land as improved open space.	Initiate dialogue with Superior Mine land owners and planners to explore potential to establish naturalized open space and habitat areas adequate to achieve wildlife habitat and path corridor objectives within the undeveloped land. Coordinate with site specific planning processes to explore opportunities to broaden the river channel, create additional meander and locate a continuous multi-use path.		<div></div>			Implementation
U4S	Coordinate with the anticipated redevelopment of Superior Mine to create interpretation zone of valley history, mining operations, and future redevelopment where appropriate at edge of active operation.	Initiate dialogue with Superior Mine land owners and planners to explore potential to create interpretive kiosk in the short term and begin discussions to consider trail and open space as an integral part of the future redevelopment of the site.				<div></div>	
							Appendices



KEYNOTE	RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION	BENEFITS				
			HYDROLOGY	ECOLOGY	RECREATION	EDUCATION	
Long Term - Confluence							
C1L	Implement trail and open space plans.	Prepare specific plan for design of trail alignment and natural open space as land or easement is acquired	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>		Executive Summary
C2L	Implement open space identified through Grantville Redevelopment Study to improve habitat and recreation.	It is anticipated that the Grantville Redevelopment Study will identify lands that are appropriate for open space to continue the San Diego River Park and Trail. If land is acquired, initiate specific development plan for the San Diego River Park and Trail.	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>		
C3L	Implement trail connection and interpretive signage to Mission San Diego De Alcala connecting via Rancho Mission Road and San Diego Mission Road.	Coordinate with the San Diego Bicycle Master Plan and Community Plans to identify specific alignment and establish easement. Explore opportunities with willing land owners to establish public access.			<div></div>	<div></div>	
Long Term - Upper Valley							Introduction
U1L	Implement potential improvements to trail and habitat connections with Alvarado Canyon and Navajo Canyon.	Prepare specific plan for design of trail alignment, natural open space and day-lighting Alvarado Creek	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>		Principles
U2L	Improve open space and trail connection to Elanus Canyon north of Admiral Baker Golf Course.	Continue dialogue with appropriate agencies, community groups and Navy planners to identify potential locations.		<div></div>	<div></div>		
U3L	Continue to collaborate with Navy planners to integrate Admiral Baker Golf Course with the river to create expanded riparian corridor, habitat and trail connections.	Continue dialogue with land owners on both sides of river to establish easements or acquire land to create trail and habitat continuity. Coordinate with Navajo Community Plan	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>		
U4L	Separate stream flow from ponds as land is redeveloped.	Continue dialogue with Navy planners and Superior Mine land owners and planners to identify potential locations and develop specific plan for realignment of river channel.	<div></div>	<div></div>			
U5L	If land is acquired, develop improved open space with views and access to ponds as habitat and recreation areas.	Coordinate with appropriate agencies and community groups to prepare specific plan and implement improved open space parks.	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	Recommendations
U6L	As Superior Mine redevelops, implement plan to focus development on river corridor and to create riparian habitat and multi-use trail as component of redevelopment plan.	Continue dialogue with appropriate agencies, community groups and Superior Mine land owners and planners to integrate the San Diego River Park and Trail with proposed development.		<div></div>	<div></div>		Design Guidelines
U7L	Create trail connection to Tierrasanta neighborhood with the San Diego River Park. This would include an overlook at the higher elevation.	Coordinate with appropriate agencies, community/special interest groups and land owners to identify specific alignment and access points.		<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	

Implementation

Appendices